

KENNEDY DEFENDS C.I.A. SAIGON ROLE

CPYRGHT

FOIAb3b

Denies It Is Not Conforming
With U.S. Policy—Says Its
Work Is Watched Closely

Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, Oct. 9—The Central Intelligence Agency operation in South Vietnam was vigorously defended today by President Kennedy.
It is "wholly untrue," the President said at his news conference, that the agency has been following a course of action contrary to that of other Government agencies. [Question 2, Page 18.]
News reports from Saigon and comments by officials here have indicated that there was a policy dispute between Henry Cabot Lodge, the United States Ambassador in Saigon, and John H. Richardson, the C.I.A. chief there.
Mr. Kennedy said that he had reviewed the record carefully over the last nine months and found nothing to indicate the C.I.A. had done anything but support policy.
"I can just assure you flatly," he said, "that the C.I.A. has not carried out independent activities but has operated under close control of the Director of Central Intelligence," who he said was operating under the "National Security Council and under my instructions."
"I think they've done a good job," he added. In answering several questions about the agency's role in South Vietnam, Mr. Kennedy confirmed that Mr. Richardson was being transferred from Saigon to a new post.
But he called the C.I.A. official a "very dedicated public servant" and cautioned against drawing the wrong conclusions about his transfer.
Officials here have explained that the identities of a number of Central Intelligence Agency officials have become widely known in South Vietnam because they have been training Vietnamese military and civilian leaders. This has destroyed the usefulness of Mr. Richardson and others and is given as a major reason for his transfer.

Lodge Said to Object
However, Ambassador Lodge is reported to have asserted that C.I.A. officials should not have such training functions and should be restricted to intelligence gathering activities. This view was rejected today by Allen W. Dulles, former C.I.A. director. Although he declined to discuss the Vietnamese situation specifically, Mr. Dulles suggested that "misunderstanding" in the field generally stems from lack of clear-cut policy direction from Washington.
Asked to respond to such comments, Mr. Kennedy asserted that the key Government agencies now were in agreement on United States policy toward South Vietnam although he acknowledged that there had previously been "different views about what actions we should take." [Question 20.]
"As of today," Mr. Kennedy declared, "I know of no disagreement between the State Department at the top, C.I.A. at the top, Defense at the top, the White House and Ambassador Lodge, on what our basic policies will be and what steps we will take to implement it."
The success of such policies, the President continued, is another matter. He told one questioner that he saw no "significant change" during the last month in the problems the United States faced in dealing with the Government of President Ngo Dinh Diem and in helping it is war against Communist guerrillas. [Question 7.]
Shortly after the South Vietnamese regime's raids on Buddhist pagodas Aug. 21, the President said in a television interview that Saigon would have to change both policies and personnel for its war effort to succeed.
In other comments about the C. I. A., the President rejected a suggestion by Senator Ernest Gruening, Democrat of Alaska, that Congress set up a "watch-dog" committee on the intelligence agency. [Question 16.]
Mr. Kennedy said that there were already Congressional committees in the House and Senate, composed of members of the Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee, that keep "very close liaison" with John A. McCone, Director of the C.I.A.
In addition, the President said that he had a personal advisory committee that kept him informed of the work of the intelligence community and that he met with Mr. McCone "at least three or four times a week" through the National Security Council.

CPYRGHT